The Fort, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland. (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum)

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The Tooth Fairy: Perspectives on Money and Magic[1]

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The loss of a milk or "baby" tooth evokes culturally stereotyped responses around the world, most of them involving ritualized disposal. In some areas the tooth is thrown toward the sun or onto a roof; in others it is buried, dropped into a crack, or eaten; not infrequently it is burned. Among the most common methods of disposal is for the tooth to be offered to an animal in the hopes of receiving a stronger tooth in return. In a contemporary North American variant of this exchange custom, children offer their shed teeth to the "Tooth Fairy."[2]

In the normative Tooth Fairy ritual, the child, following parental instructions, places the lost tooth under his pillow at night. Some children leave notes with the tooth, explaining the loss and requesting payment; others rely on the tooth alone to make the plea. Once the child is asleep, the parents replace the tooth with a gift or, more commonly, money. The child understands upon awakening that the Tooth Fairy has made the exchange. Variants of the custom stipulate that the tooth shall be placed in a glass of water or on a plate and that the child shall be rewarded only if he or she has been "good." This last variant suggests a parallel to the Santa Claus custom—as does the belief that the fairy will not come if the child stays awake in the hope of seeing her.[3]

As an embodiment of magical munificence, the Tooth Fairy is second only to the Christmas benefactor in the folklore of American childhood. Juvenile belief in the figure is as widespread and durable as belief in Saint Nick and the iconic elements of the accompanying ritual—the pillow, the unseen visitor, the transformation of the tooth into money—are as stereotyped in popular culture as the stocking by the chimney or flying reindeer.[4] So firmly entrenched has the Tooth Fairy become in juvenile fantasy life that discovering the "truth" about this shadowy benefactor constitutes a rite of passage out of innocence: to say that someone "still believes in the Tooth Fairy" metaphorically defines him as naive.

Yet while Santa Claus has not wanted for scholarly attention, the Tooth Fairy has been relatively neglected.[5] Psychologists have provided useful data on her place in children's cognitive development.[6] "Tooth

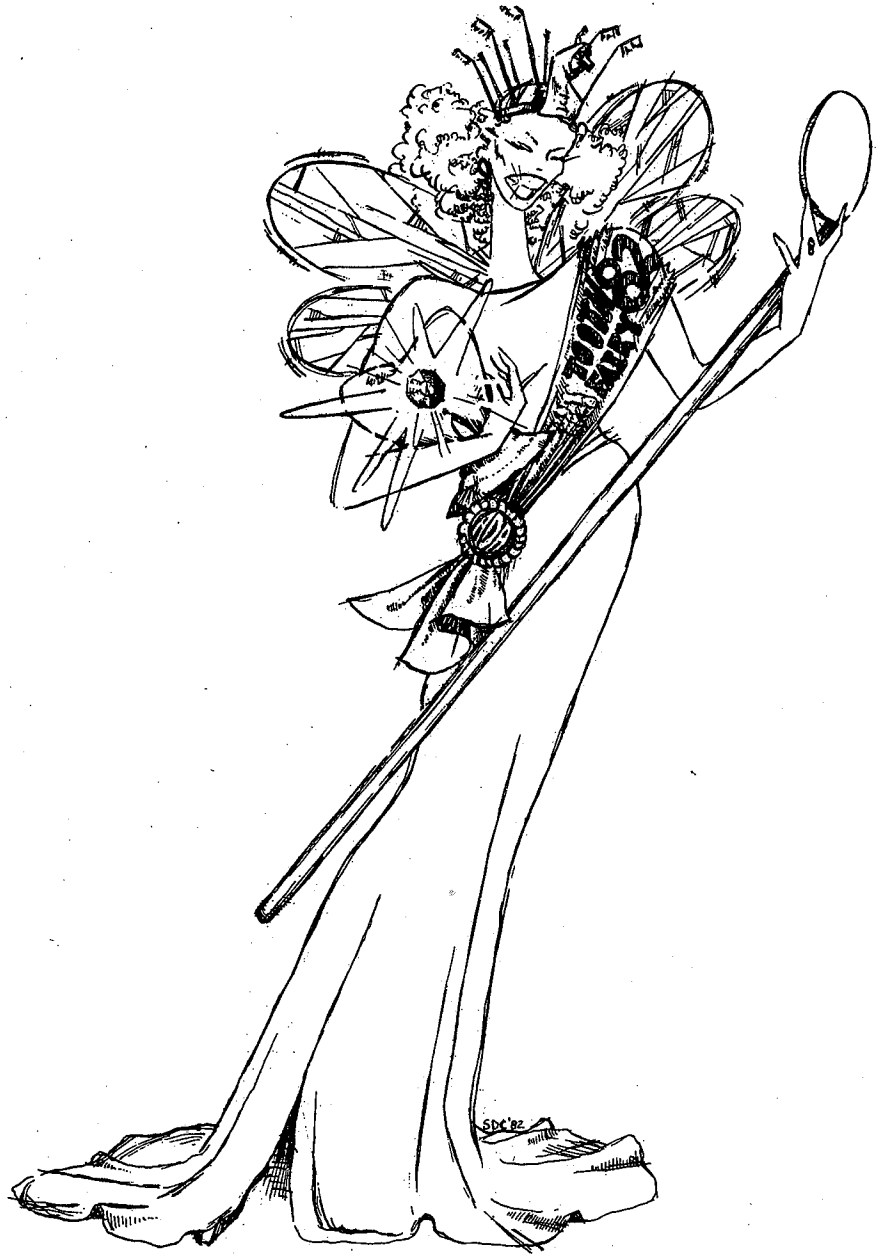

Figure 1. "Ms. America Tooth Fairy" by Sonja Carlborg, a tooth fairy 'beauty queen' whose American Dental Association banner and dental mirror suggest her association with modern dental practice. (Rosemary Wells)

Fairy consultant" Rosemary Wells has investigated popular representations and conducted pioneering surveys on custom details.[7] "Ethnodentist" William Carter and his colleagues have produced an extremely useful catalogue of dental folklore.[8] The contributions of folklorists however, have been scant. Leo Kanner's classic monograph on tooth lore does not mention the custom at all, while more recent studies by Granger and Tanner and later American researchers do so only in passing.[9] Although citations in American archives mention elements of the custom dating from early in this century,[10] the Tooth Fairy's genealogy, her development from folk belief to national custom and her contemporary social function all remain obscure. These three topics are the concern of this paper.

I. An Uncertain Genealogy

Relying on Katharine Brigg's standard work, Rosemary Wells concludes that the dental sprite is "America's only fairy"—a creature "never referred to in European literature," and equally absent from Old World folklore.[11] This is true if you are looking for her by name. Seek a "tooth fairy" in European indexes of folklore motifs and you will come away disappointed.[12] Nor are most Europeans familiar with the figure or the custom (Americanized Britain is an exception). The stylized ritual of pillow, tooth, and money seems not only American in origin, but of fairly recent vintage; archival evidence supports Wells's reasonable guess of about 1900 as a starting point.[13]

The spoor of the Tooth Fairy is weak, but European precursors, if not prototypes, do exist. In the absence of a clear line of descent, let me itemize those European beliefs and practices that invite comparison with the North American custom.

The Tooth Coin as "Fairy Gold"

Among the commonly cited attributes of fairies are their affluence and accompanying generosity; the pot at the end of the leprechauns' rainbow and the fairies' double payment of a debt to humans suggest a broad tradition of philanthropic pixies.[14] With this tradition in mind, Jacqueline Simpson once suggested that the Tooth Fairy exchange may derive from an Old British custom of rewarding industrious servant girls with "fairy" coins, left surreptitiously in their shoes as they slept.[15]

The structural similarities are clear enough—domestic hygiene is rewarded by a *mater familias* acting on behalf of a phantom donor—but one critical element, the lost tooth, is conspicuously absent. In addition, no

evidence suggests a transition from shoe to pillow and the Tooth Fairy did not become widely known in England until the 1960s. This first candidate thus seems more a parallel than a precursor.

The Tooth as Propitiation or Self-Defense

Both Irish and British folk traditions are rich in stories of doleful pixie changelings: healthy infants who are exchanged in their cradles for sickly, inconsolable fairy look-alikes.[16] There are structural links between Tooth Fairy customs and folk practices designed to foil such kidnappers. Since teeth have long symbolized imperishability, they function worldwide as talismans against evil.[17] The tooth of a child, set near it as it sleeps, might be viewed, therefore, both as a form of preventive magic and more complexly, as a surrogate sacrifice—a *pars pro toto* offering for spirits who seek to snatch the child itself.

Two peculiarities of the Tooth Fairy ritual lend credence to this idea. One appears in the most common variant of the custom, in which the tooth is sprinkled with salt and placed near the bed, in a glass or on a plate. Salt—probably because of its "magical" preservative properties—has since antiquity symbolized purity, protection, and eternal life. Thus a salted tooth might serve, better than either an unsalted one or salt alone, as a bane against malevolent pixies.[18]

The second peculiarity is that other traditional forms of aversive magic also suggest the pillowed tooth. Iron has been used for centuries as a magical means of protection against evil—most commonly in the form of horseshoes, crucifixes, and knives. To guard sleeping children against evil fairies, one source suggests placing a knife under the pillow; Briggs implicitly links this custom to the Tooth Fairy when she cites a knife held in the mouth![19]

With regard to surrogate offerings, it may be noted that since at least the thirteenth century, Europeans have placated water spirits by sacrificing material goods in place of the children whom the spirits sought, often yearly, as their due; German custom recognized in particular the propitiatory value of coins and the children's own clothing.[20]

Since water spirits are seen as especially hazardous to children, it is interesting to observe that between one such spirit and the Tooth Fairy there is a suggestive linguistic connection. Lancashire's famous "nursery bogey," the "cannibal witch" Jenny Greenteeth, typically lurks in ponds, awaiting children, but in spite of—or perhaps because of—her gruesome nature, she is also sometimes used to elicit obedience ("Go to sleep now or Jenny Greenteeth will get you").[21] Vickery cites the practice in Lancashire families of encouraging toothbrushing by threatening children with Jenny Greenteeth. There is an aesthetic component to such threats, because the pond scum known as Lesser Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) is conventionally

said to resemble green teeth.[22] As Wells has pointed out, modern dentists also enlist the Tooth Fairy for hygienic purposes and in some families the standard payment for a baby tooth is reduced by degrees for each cavity the tooth contains.[23]

The Italian "Tooth Fairy": Marantega

Throughout most of Italy, the Christmas season benefactor, corresponding to northern Europe's Saint Nicholas, goes by the name of Befana. Gaunt and toothless, she resembles the stock crone figure of popular legends, yet unlike other witches, she can be kindly to children; it is Befana, the Old One (*la Vecchia*) or the Witch (*la Strega*), who dispenses presents to the deserving at Epiphany.

The Venetian version of this witch, called Marantega, displays generosity not only at the Christmas season, but also when children lose teeth. A shed tooth is placed under the child's bed or under its pillow, and in the night Marantega—thinking perhaps, of her own toothlessness—exchanges it for a coin. Although there is no clear link between this Italian *strega* and the American fairy, on occasion the latter does appear as a witch. In a fearsome illustration for Joan Aiken's story "Clem's Dream," for example, she is the conventionally evil, scraggly-haired crone; here she takes not only children's teeth but their dreams. In a story by Nurit Karlin, the tooth collector is even called the Tooth Witch—complete with black robe, cone hat, and broomstick—until the job is taken over by her fairy apprentice.[24]

French Connections

Similarly isolated and similarly provocative parallels appear in French archival material. Recall that Wells has traced the American custom to about the turn of this century; there are accounts of at least two Gallic tooth rituals that are roughly contemporary. In the first, from 1887, the child puts the tooth beneath its pillow and the Virgin Mary exchanges it for money or a toy.[25] The second account, from 1902, cites a "good fairy" as the benevolent dental agent and the reward is candy, not money.[26]

Chronology favors these French connections, although the genealogy is hazy. In contemporary French tooth exchanges, it is a mouse, not a fairy, who takes the tooth; in a recent dictionary of French superstitions, the fairy agent is banished to uncivilized "Anglo-Saxon" countries.[27] Arguing for the link, perhaps, is the fact that French Canadian children today do offer their teeth to a *fée*.[28] Whether they adopted this custom from French relatives or English neighbors is not clear.

It is tempting to suggest one further French link. The Catholic patroness of toothache, Saint Apollonia, appears in conventional

hagiography holding pincers—in martyring her, the Romans first pulled her teeth—and the universal saintly icon, palm fronds. In François Loux's stimulating volume *L'Ogre et la Dent*, a painting of the young woman holding these feathery boughs suggests a comparison to angelic (or fairy) wings.[29] Further research might determine whether this visual resemblance is mentioned elsewhere in the literature.

The Tooth Fairy and the "Tooth Mouse"

Finally, the folklore figure that I consider, in spite of surface dissimilarities, to be the best candidate for the title of tooth *Urfée*: the ubiquitous European "tooth mouse."

Shed teeth are offered to animals throughout Europe, with the commonest recipients being crows, other birds, and rodents. In the most widespread version of hole, behind furniture, or near the hearth or oven—and with a doggerel formula, asks the mouse to exchange it for a better one.[30]

Disciples of Max Müller in the 1920s saw this ritual as a survival of ancient offerings to fire gods. Imaginatively linking the mouse to the sun, they attempted to explain at one stroke the three commonest methods of tooth disposal: whether the child hurled the tooth into the air, threw it into the fire, or offered it to a mouse, the common element was sun worship.[31] In more recent, psychoanalytical interpretations, the mouse becomes a phallic symbol and the surrender ritual an act of compensation, both mirroring and dramatically resolving the Oedipal fantasy.[32]

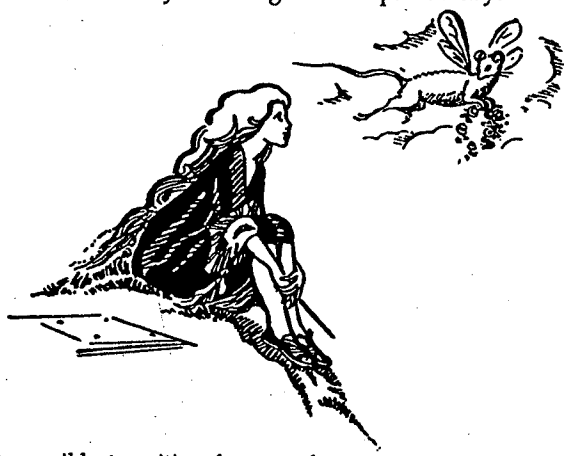

Figure 2. A possible transition from tooth mouse to tooth fairy. From Mme. D'Aulnoy's eighteenth century tale "La Bonne Petite Souris," *The White Cat and Other Old French Fairy Tales*, ed. Rachel Field and illustrated by Elizabeth MacKinstry (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

As charmingly provocative as such readings may be, I would suggest, with a nod toward William of Occam, that the obvious reason for choosing a mouse is homeopathic. Whatever they may signify metaphorically, mice are undeniably small rodents with great incisors and the good sense to nest in warm, dark places. With magical logic, one surrenders teeth to these rodents in the hopes of getting better, that is rodentlike, teeth in return. The logic is preserved in the offering of teeth to hard beaked crows and in the belief (cited in both Europe and America) that you should never shed teeth where a dog, or a pig, might come upon them—unless you want dogs' or pigs' teeth in return.[33]

At first glance, the candidacy of the tooth mouse seems less probable than that of Jenny Greenteeth, the Virgin Mary or Marantega, but three factors bolster the mouse's case.

First, there is the range of the custom. The shilling in the shoe, Jenny Greenteeth, Marantega, even the visit from the Virgin, represent—to judge from the evidence—quite localized beliefs and family practices. The tooth mouse, on the other hand, ranges from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and also makes frequent appearances not only in North America, but also in Latin America, where it is widely known as "mouse Perez."[34] The sheer body of evidence allows for many intersections, on both sides of the Atlantic, where the mouse could, in effect, have sprouted wings.

Second, there are hints in exchange formulas that hard molars and hard cash can be confused. In most formulas, the child asks the mouse for a "better" tooth and sometimes for a "tooth of iron." Occasionally, however, the child demands a more *valuable* tooth—one made of silver or gold.[35] From iron tooth to gold tooth to gold itself requires only a modest leap of logic.

Third, not only is there evidence, as we have seen, of the switch from mouse to fairy in nineteenth-century France, but there is also what Carter lucidly calls a "credible mechanism" for explaining the shift.[36] That mechanism, first identified by Loux, is a popular fairy tale, "La Bonne Petite Souris," by Madame D'Aulnoy at the beginning of the eighteenth century and reprinted in 1837. In this tale, a nameless "good queen," imprisoned by a nameless "bad king," befriends a mouse that is impressed with her kindness. The creature turns out to be a fairy and she not only frees the queen from her imprisonment, but also knocks out the wicked king's teeth, hides under his pillow to torment him and eventually has him assassinated by his palace guard. A 1928 translation of the D'Aulnoy story depicts the fairy quite explicitly as a smiling rodent—with wings.[37]

Does this prove that the Tooth Fairy was once a mouse? No, but with range, chronology and that "credible mechanism" on its side, it is the most "qualified" of the various candidates. Interestingly, three modern children's authors seem to agree. Fran and Frank McAllister's 1976 "history" of the Tooth Fairy uses the same mouse-to-fairy plot element as

D'Aulnoy; in Lucy Bate's popular *Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth*, the fairy is a rabbit with wings; and in Stephen Kroll's *Loose Tooth*, the children and the fairy (that is, their parents) are bats—like the conventional Tooth Fairy, winged and nocturnal.[38]

II. From Folk Belief to National Custom

Tooth fairies made appearances in the United States as early as the turn of this century and the archival evidence shows that informants who had grown up in the 1920s and 1930s were familiar with the pillow ritual, but the agent of exchange in this period was not commonly known as "the Tooth Fairy," or even as *a* tooth fairy. The reward for shed teeth came from such nonspecializing benefactors as "the fairy," "the fairies," "the good fairy," "the fairy princess," and "the fairy queen."[39] The national stereotype of a single dental fairy only became established after the Second World War.

The term "tooth fairy" is first indexed in popular literature in 1949, when a Lee Rogow story by that title appeared in *Collier's* magazine. Wells takes this as evidence that the custom was by then well established; an alternate explanation would be that the story spurred, rather than merely registered, a developing tradition. In both North America and Great Britain, the stereotype did not achieve popularity until the 1950s; Wells observes that not until 1979 did the custom find its way into "general interest" scholarship.[40]

Why mid-century? Why this sudden spurt to prominence of a long practiced but by no means "codified" folk tradition? Or, to phrase it as a query about genre, What transforms the Tooth Fairy ritual, in the decade or so just after World War II, from a relatively obscure folk belief into a national custom? I would suggest that three significant factors were postwar affluence, a child-directed family culture, and media encouragement.

Postwar Affluence

While researching this paper, I asked my father-in-law, who grew up in rural Arkansas in the 1920s and 1930s, whether his family had practiced the Tooth Fairy custom. "We were too poor," he told me. "Nickels were hard to come by. You certainly wouldn't waste one on a tooth."

This telling comment may be representative. Jacqueline Simpson once surmised that before the 1960s in Great Britain, wealthy households may have observed the tooth exchange custom, but that poorer ones could not afford to.[41] That is a useful speculation about America too. It seems likely

that the greater availability of discretionary income during the postwar boom may have facilitated the spread of the custom.

The Cult of the Child

Childhood understood as a distinct and distinctly honored phase of life is a fairly recent development.[42] The idea of catering to one's child, as the *raison d'être* of the family unit, is newer still. It enjoyed a heyday in the 1950s, when the public canonized James Dean for being misunderstood and all "good" parents knew—because Dr. Spock told them so—that their proper role was to serve their children's needs, among them the need to fantasize and to feel loved. The dominance of this new, child-centered view of the family made the 1950s fertile ground for what Wells calls "a symbolic ritual of replacement, born in sympathy, propelled in love and sustained in warmth and care."[43]

Media Encouragement

In his survey of European fairy traces in the New World, Wayland Hand identified publication as a significant factor in the consolidation of folk traditions.[44] The history of the Grimm brothers' tales, the dime novelists' Billy the Kid, and the stock Santa Claus created by Clement Moore and Thomas Nast, bear out his observation. Popular literature—including Rogow's 1949 story and juvenile treatments of the belief appearing from the 1960s on—may have helped to standardize and spread the Tooth Fairy custom.[45]

An even more likely standardizing factor than print, however, was film. Probably it is not mere coincidence that the decade immediately preceding the proliferation of the Tooth Fairy custom saw the release of four feature films in which female "good people" played central roles. In 1939, there was Billie Barnes, as a shimmering Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, in a modern fairy tale, *The Wizard of Oz*. A year later saw the Walt Disney version of Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, in which "The Blue Fairy" served as *dea ex machina*. In Disney's 1950 *Cinderella*, the ash girl was rewarded for her selflessness by a "fairy godmother" who, like D'Aulnoy's character, worked magic with mice. And in 1953, the most diminutive and stereotypical of media fairies, Tinkerbell, was saved from death by the eternal boy in *Peter Pan*. All of these films reached massive audiences, not only upon general release, but also in television presentations; it is likely that they helped to "nationalize" the folk custom.[46] Archival evidence supports the conjecture, for beginning in the 1950s, informants confuse and in some cases consciously identify, the

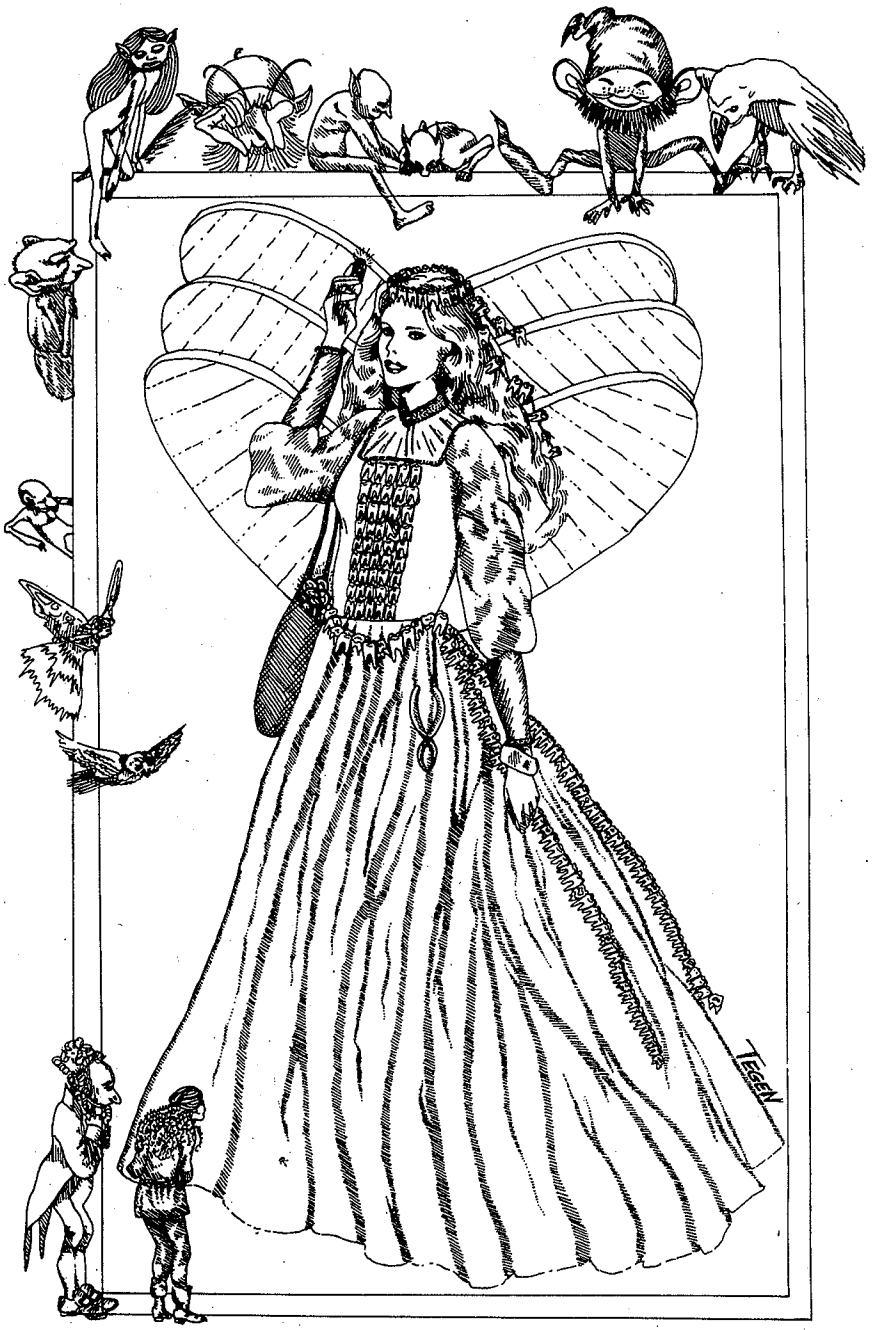

Figure 3. "The Tooth Fairy" by Ann Tegen Hill, is an excellent example of the conventionally pretty, winged, female fairy as codified by postwar Disney films.

Tooth Fairy with "the blue fairy," "the fairy godmother," "a small tinkerbell," "a Peter Pan with wings," and "the good witch from the Wizard of Oz."[47]

The films may also have helped to establish the Tooth Fairy's gender—a feature that remains highly stereotyped in popular understanding. Wells has collected several examples of male, non-gendered and even non-anthropomorphic tooth fairies, but the Hollywood image still predominates: seventy-four percent of Wells's tally considered the figure to be female.[48]

III. From Magic to Money

Functional analyses of the Tooth Fairy custom, thus far, have been provided only by developmental psychologists. Typically, they have interpreted the domestic ritual as a psychodrama of fantasy management or of condolence.[49] Parental attitudes toward the custom are consistent with this domicentric approach. In Wells's Tooth Fairy survey of over 2000 participants, the principal reasons given for continuing the practice were that it gave the parents pleasure, gave the child pleasure, or made the loss of the tooth less painful. Other respondents cited the child's own expectations or the model established by "other parents."[50] Such perspectives illuminate the ritual from the inside; they do not explain its social utility or the manner in which the transformation of tooth into money validates specific economic behavior.

That behavior, clearly, is open market exchange; the unstated subtext of the Tooth Fairy ritual is "produce and sell." This message stands in sharp, and one might say progressive, contrast to the "anal" message of non-exchange economies—"produce and hoard." The more static formula was evident in those Nordic societies that presented "tooth fees" to children for *cutting* teeth.[51] This is an appropriate reward in a hoarding economy, where the mere possession of goods is a sign of worth.

Not so in more fluid economies, where it is the surrender of goods that drives the system—first according to the principle of reciprocity, then according to the more rationalized homeostasis of monetization.[52] What begins as barter or gift exchange becomes, with the introduction of money, the more organized system of "standard value." So the *quid pro quo* of a tooth for a tooth (even a gold or iron tooth for a bone one) ultimately gives way to cash payment. That is marketplace logic and it is the social lesson that parents teach their children when they direct them to place teeth under a pillow.

Three peculiarities of the custom underscore this observation. First, the Tooth Fairy custom, like any other free market ritual, is affected by broad market forces. Nothing better shows how the ritual reflects

economic trends than tooth exchange inflation. Between 1900 and 1975, Wells has estimated, the average amount of money paid for a lost tooth rose from twelve to eighty-five cents.[53] That is still a relatively modest sum, but if the ritual were as innocent of commercial ramifications as is often supposed, one might expect less inflationary impact. That the fairy's payment rises consistently with wages and prices suggests how clearly the custom replicates the macro-economy.

Second, the inflationary spiral is also "micro-determined," by competition among children for greater rewards. As the Lee Rogow story suggested as early as 1949, one factor in the pricing of children's teeth is "wage pressure" from the young "suppliers" of teeth. A recent cartoon by Lynn Johnston makes the point clearly. A little girl, showing her mother a quarter, hopes for a different "toof fairy" next time. Why? "'Cause the one that went to Melody's house gave her fifty cents." Dismay on the mother's face betokens a promise that future payments will be up to market levels.[54]

Third, the tooth rite is by all evidence an adult creation. Surveys agree that supervising parents, not siblings or peers, typically tell their children about the fairy; furthermore, only one in five parents continues the practice because children expect or demand it.[55] Little wonder. The exchange principle is not inherent; it must be learned. The appropriate teachers are caring parents, who understand the economy and can introduce, in a pleasant fiction, its basic rules.

To be sure, parents do not teach the economic model in a calculating, or even conscious fashion. On the contrary, they may take considerable care to disguise the monetary nature of the transaction. The most common amounts left by the fairy, even in 1983, were still the nominal quarter and dime. Children are commonly given to understand that the fairy magically "changes" their teeth into money rather than "exchanging" or "buying" them. She uses the teeth not as commodities but in equally magical or philanthropic ways; they are given to toothless old people or to newborns; they become the wall of her castle, or scattered stars. One ingenious mother from San Antonio leaves her child not "ordinary" exchangeable coins, but glitter decorated ones. Other parents rent the services of Tooth Fairy impersonators, bringing the "magic" of the custom to life in children's bedrooms.[56]

These attempts to purge the fairy custom of monetary implications recall a similar "decontamination" of Christmas customs. In his survey of theories regarding the meaning of Santa Claus, Hagstrom notes that the use of the Christmas elf as surrogate gift bringer allows parents to express "morally uncontaminated sentiments toward children"—that is, to give without the implied "threat" of reciprocity. Waits, in a fine dissertation on Christmas gifts, shows how gift wrapping offsets the "taint" of store bought-goods. And Caplow, studying Christmas gifts and kin networks,

suggests that the commercial efflorescence of the American Christmas serves to bolster "important but insecure" relationships.[57] In all of these studies, one sees the parental need to divest a "magical money" event of its economic features.

Zelizer has portrayed the lesson in a broader context. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, she writes, American children began to undergo a process of "sacralization," and to occupy "a separate noncommercial place, *extra-commercium*," in which their economic and sentimental values were "declared to be radically incompatible." But the transformation of the child from a "useful" into a "priceless" family member did not come easily. Sentiment and economics would not stay neatly asunder and so parents had continually to be on guard against a fearful "monetization of the home." The "culturally invented boundary between wage and allowance" proved particularly difficult to maintain, as it was threatened on the one hand by payment for chores and on the other by the tendency to use allowance as a reward for good behavior.[58]

Zelizer's sophisticated analysis helps to illuminate the relationship between the "caring" and the "counting" aspects not only of allowance, but of the Tooth Fairy ritual as well. Just as the family treatment of "priceless" children reflected a tension between sentiment and necessity, so contemporary tooth exchanges reflect an uneasy amalgam of parental affection, parental control, and ubiquitous (if invisible) market pressures. In an economy where the ultimate magic is the power of money, the responsible parent ironically prepares the child for reality by encouraging a fantasy that Wells appropriately calls "a reassuring image of good capitalist values."[59]

Thus magic, whose essence is transformation, is itself transformed. We move from an image of the generic "good" fairy, turning bone teeth into nominal nickels, toward a specialist "tooth" fairy, predictably exchanging molars at the market rate. With the encouragement of mortgage-carrying parents, children now grow more than mere teeth; they "grow" the system by putting their own "products" on the market. That professional impersonators and "Tooth Fairy pillow" manufacturers have turned the ritual into personal profit only underlines the system's genius at turning wishes into coin of the realm.

The process of market cooption has long been understood with regard to the internationally successful figure of Santa Claus. Erich Wolf has aptly, if somewhat cynically, described him as the embodiment of the free market paradigm: "If you are good, you will receive goods."[60] The Tooth Fairy holds a shorter and less visible pedigree but her macroeconomic function, in today's society, differs only in degree. The Tooth Fairy is commonly seen as more personal and surely less commercialized than the American Santa. As the economic subtext of her ritual suggests, however, she can also be viewed as more rationalized. Santa, after all, still brings

presents, while the Tooth Fairy translates everything into cash. Santa Claus's promise is pre-monetary; goodness gets you Barbies or a Rambo doll. The Tooth Fairy's promise is more modern; anything, even your own body, can be turned into gold. That, in its final reductive wisdom, is precisely the vaunted magic of free enterprise.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the centennial meeting of the American Folklore Society in Philadelphia, October 18, 1989. I am thankful to all those who commented on my presentation, and especially to York University's Carole Carpenter, who sent me information on Canadian tooth fairy beliefs from the Ontario Folklore-Folklife Archive (Carpenter). Thanks also to Karen Pouliot of the Northwestern University Dental School Library for information on Rosemary Wells's work; and to Dr. Wells herself, not only for her pioneering research, but also for sharing stories and illustrations from her collection of "tooth fairiana." Finally, my appreciation to George Carey, for encouraging my interest in folklore and for introducing me to the University of Massachusetts Folklore Archive.
2. For surveys of tooth disposal customs, see Carter et al.; Granger; Kanner; Rooth; Svanberg.
3. Wells (1983b) found that five percent of her respondents practiced the "pillow burial" variant; recollections of my New Jersey childhood and materials from Ontario (Carpenter) and Massachusetts (Krantz) confirm its general popularity. Use of the tooth fairy as an incentive to sleep and to "be good" is also cited in the Ontario and Massachusetts archives; cf. Widdowson 129–30.
4. Prentice et al. discovered in a 1978 survey of sixty young children that only two had *not* been left money by the tooth fairy. Of the over 2000 respondents in one survey (Wells 1983b), eighty-eight percent favored continuing the custom.
5. The reason is obvious enough. Unlike the tooth fairy, Santa Claus has been stereotyped for a century and a half thanks to Clement Moore's 1822 poem and Thomas Nast's later illustrations. For discussions of the Santa Claus custom, see Barnett (especially chapter 2); Hagstrom; Coffin (chapter 4); Sansom; Sereno; Wolf.
6. See Blair et al.; Prentice et al.; Scheibe and Condry.
7. See Wells. The results of her most exhaustive survey appear in her July 1983 *cal* report.
8. The work by Carter et al. is a comprehensive and intelligently annotated compendium; tooth fairies are discussed on 77–82.
9. See Kanner; Granger; Tanner.
10. Tooth fairies are mentioned, by function if not by name, in Brown; Cannon; Hyatt; Puckett 1981. The earliest citation is 1900 (Cannon no. 701).
11. Wells 1980. Rooth, in an interesting analysis of Cleveland practices, concurs that the tooth fairy is "American." It would be more accurate to say "North American," for—as Carpenter's Ontario material shows—the fairy is widely popular with Canadian as well as United States children.
12. Stith Thompson does not mention a tooth fairy, nor do Leach, MacCulloch, or the standard French, German, and Italian superstition collections.

13. Wells 1980.
14. See Stith Thompson, F342; Froud and Lee; Hand, 143.
15. Simpson is cited in Hand. Creighton and Wright also mention the custom as British; Svanberg located it in Mexico.
16. On changelings, see Stith Thompson, F321 and Briggs 1980, 1981, and the essays in this volume by Susan Schoon Eberly and Joyce Munro.
17. The indestructibility of the teeth is mentioned as far back as Pliny. See also Frazer; Kanner; Hoffmann-Krayer and Bachtold-Stäubli; Lindsay; Samson.
19. On salt as a prophylactic against evil see Frazer; Jones; Thompson F384.1; Briggs 1981; Harland; Henderson; Puckett 1926; Coffin and Cohen. The salted tooth left next to the bed is mentioned by Opie and Opie; Radford and Radford; Granger; Waring. When teeth are burned, they are also salted first, to guard their owner against "witches" (Radford and Radford) or "unfriendly persons" (Randolph).
19. On horseshoes, see Lawrence. Froud and Lee mention the knife under the pillow; Briggs 1981, the knife held in the mouth; Puckett 1926 (159) notes the black American belief that a fork under the pillow will protect the sleeper from being ridden by nightmares.
20. For dangerous *Wassergeister*, see Hoffmann-Krayer and Bachtold-Stäubli 9: 166 ff.; and the Grimms, legend nos. 49, 75, and 60–7. Donald Ward's instructive commentary to the Grimms discusses surrogate offerings; cf. Hoffmann-Krayer and Bachtold Stäubli 9: 179. For British water sprites, see Rabuzzi. For similarly dangerous fairies in Newfoundland see Widdowson 124 ff.
21. The concept of "nursery bogey" or "warning fiction" is discussed by Briggs (1980, 1981).
22. For the *Lemna minor* connection, and the use of Jenny Greenteeth as a spur to hygiene, see Vickery. Simpson 1987 (65) cites the conventional warning: "If you don't go to sleep, Jenny Greenteeth will get you."
23. Cited in Munro 46. See also Krantz; Wells 1983c. A modern "tooth fairy" entrepreneur also encourage"s dental hygiene, even carrying a giant toothbrush as a "sceptre." See "Brushing Up."
24. For Marantega: see Riegler 1920 and 1923–24; Negelein; Pitrè. See also Aiken; Karlin.
25. Daleau 35.
26. The 1902 "candy fairy" is cited by Carter et al. 78.
27. See Lasne and Gaultier.
28. See Des Ruisseaux 15.
29. The painting in Loux is by the seventeenth century artist Francisco Zurbarán.
30. Cross-cultural examples of tooth offerings to animals appear in Carter; Rooth; Svanberg; Lewis. For German variants of the *Zahnmaus* custom, see Kanner 50. Carter et al. conflate the hearth or stove mouse with the German "oven man," suggesting the latter as a "folkloristic predecessor of tooth fairy rituals." The conflation is not unreasonable, since a German tradition does anthropomorphize the tooth mouse as *Ofenmann* (Hoffmann-Krayer and Bachtold-Staübli 6: 1194). Cf. Cannon no. 701, where teeth are placed in the oven so the fairies can exchange them for money; and Krantz, who found evidence of teeth being placed on thermostats and radiators.
31. The most elaborate presentation of the sun worship reading is by Lindsay. For European examples, see also Frazer; Negelein; Riegler; Lewis; Samson; Kanner. For Mesoamerican examples, see Tibon. Dorson's 1955 essay remains the definitive critique of the Müller hypothesis.

32. See Lewis; Russell.
33. The fear of acquiring animal teeth through carelessness is mentioned by Henderson; Randolph; Johnson and Withers; Radford and Radford. It also appears in the European and American archives. The homeopathic explanation was first popularized by Frazer.
34. Examples appear in all archives and are placed in context in Svanberg; Rooth.
35. The best discussions of formulas are Svanberg's and Rooth's. MacCulloch (149) cites an unusual inversion in which the child requests a bone tooth in exchange for gold.
36. Carter et al. 78.
37. The illustration is the endpiece to the 1928 Planche translation.
38. See McAllister and McAllister; Bate; Kroll.
39. See Cannon; Puckett 1981.
40. Wells 1980 identifies Alan Dundes's article on "Fairy" in the 1979 *World Book* as giving the first "general interest" notice of the tooth fairy.
41. Cited in Hand 148. Wells 1980 also lists financial status as an influence on the adoption of the custom.
42. See Aries and for a treatment of nineteenth-century developments, Zelizer.
43. Cited in Dent.
44. Hand 141.
45. For surveys of the juvenile literature see Wells 1980 and 1983a.
46. Carter et al. also cite the possible influence of film.
47. The tooth agent as fairy godmother appears in Ontario (Carpenter); Puckett 1981, nos. 1468 and 1472; Cannon no. 704. As the blue fairy, she appears in Cannon no. 703; Rooth 67. Krantz's sources cited Tinkerbell and Peter Pan.
48. Wells 1983b.
49. See Blair et al.; Prentice et al.; Scheibe and Condry; Wells 1980.
50. Wells 1983b.
51. The Nordic *tann-fé* (tooth fee) is mentioned in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, MacCulloch; Kanner 45.
52. The classic statement of "reciprocity" is given by Mauss.
53. Wells 1983b.
54. The Johnston cartoon appeared as a United Press Syndicate feature on March 4, 1988.
55. Wells 1983b. Blair et al. say that the tooth fairy custom needs "more parental involvement to support than belief in the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus" (694). Prentice et al. reported that ninety-seven percent of their sample of parents actively encouraged their children's belief, even when they were convinced that the child already knew the truth. For a pathological example of parental concern over children's teeth, see Russell.
56. Figures on the "nominal quarter and dime," as well as the distinction between "changing" and "exchanging," are in Wells 1983b. Theories on the fairy's use of the teeth appear throughout the literature; see especially Cannon no. 703; Carpenter; Krantz; McAllister and McAllister. I am indebted to Jan Harold Brunvand for sending me a "Heloise" newspaper column on the Texas mother's "glittered" coins. For an example of tooth fairy impersonation, see "Brushing Up."
57. Hagstrom; Waits; Caplow.

58. Zelizer; on allowance see 97–112.
59. Cited in Munro 45.
60. Wolf 153.

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